



News Release

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ARMiE selects top warriors, medics

By Ed Drohan

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SEMBACH KASERNE, Germany – Five Soldiers were selected as the best of the best for Army Medicine in Europe April 17 after four grueling days of physical and mental testing at the Grafenwoehr Training Area.

The five were among 18 Soldiers competing in the annual ARMiE Best Warrior and Best Medic competition. Competitors represented their individual organizations – Europe Regional Medical Command, Bavaria Medical Department Activity, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Europe Regional Dental Command, Public Health Command Region-Europe and U.S. Army Medical Material Center-Europe. Each competitor had already won their unit-level competitions.

Three BMEDDAC Soldiers earned top honors in the competition. Staff Sgt. Marcus Freeman and Sgt. Erik Junker were named top medics and will compete as a team at the U.S. Army Medical Command competition, while Spc. Ryan Figueroa took Soldier of the year honors. The Noncommissioned Officer of the year was Sgt. Felipe Montoya from the Bavaria Dental Activity and the Junior Officer of the Year was 1st Lt. Juan Mendez from PHCR-E.

The competitors arrived at Camp Aachen on the Grafenwoehr Training Area April 14 and after in-processing, began the competition with an Army Physical Fitness Test followed by a written exam. Then came what most competitors called the toughest event of the competition, the mystery physical training event.

“You had to run an unknown distance (which turned out to be about four miles) right after the PT test,” Freeman said. “You had to move tires and do a Sked drag. It was tough.”

Over the course of the next three days, competitors would face a number of other challenging events. While all competitors faced day and night land navigation, M9 pistol qualification, an obstacle course, and a 12-mile ruck march, some events were aimed toward either the warrior or medic participants. Best Warrior competitors completed a written essay, an oral board where they were grilled by senior NCOs, and the Warrior Tasks and Battle Drill lane. The WTBD lanes includes simulated attacks, weapon malfunctions, gas attacks, casualty care, and other basic Soldier skills, said WTBD coordinator Sgt. 1st Class Hans Bjorklund from BMEDDAC, the competition host.

Medics were evaluated in the medical lanes where they came under simulated attack, and triaged, treated, and transported battlefield casualties. Treatments included starting IVs, treating a collapsed lung and other serious – but simulated – combat injuries, all while in the field.

While the competition was grueling, cadre made sure that participants followed guidelines set out in the Army Medicine Performance Triad, which includes sleep, activity, and nutrition.

“Throughout the competition, the goals of the Performance Triad were sustained for competitors by affording them sleep with no less than seven hours a night,” said Sgt. 1st Class Erica Leiva-Reed, ERMIC operations. “This was vital for their health, performance and wellbeing. They were provided two healthy hot meals which managed their energy level, ensuring the completion of the entire competition. Last but not least, they averaged 10,000 steps daily, keeping with the healthy lifestyle of the Performance Triad.”

The events combined to make what ERMIC Command Sgt. Maj. Ly Lac called a challenging competition, and the selection of the best Soldiers to represent Army Medicine in Europe.

“This was really challenging,” Lac said. “The confidence course was modeled after the Air Assault School course. These people are the best.”

While the top competitors in the four categories were recognized for their achievement, everybody who competed deserved recognition, said ERMIC Commanding General Brig. Gen. Van Coots.

“I want to congratulate not only those who won, but all those who competed,” Coots said.